

June 8, 1998

IN THE MATTER OF THE
LICENSURE OF KAREN GABA

Dear Ms. Gaba:

At its meeting of May 14, 1998 the State Board of Examiners reviewed your application for certification following revocation made pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:11-3.6(g). The Board carefully considered your letter of March 3, 1998 in which you summarized your understanding of the circumstances that led to the revocation of your county substitute license in March of 1996 and your statements concerning rehabilitation. It also reviewed the letters of recommendation submitted on your behalf by your recent employers. The Board also reviewed the settlement documents related to the revocation proceedings against your county substitute licensure brought before the State Board of Examiners dated June 18, 1996. Upon careful review of the record of this matter, the Board voted to block issuance of a new county substitute license to you for the reasons that follow.

The Board first noted that the record included a resignation you signed on February 14, 1994 that contains a statement that on the evening of February 12, 1994 you served alcoholic beverages and “aprox 1 hit of pot” to minor students at your home.

The Board commented that such admissions are extremely serious. Indeed, the consistent and long-standing policy of this State is to eliminate the use of illegal drugs. See, In the Matter of the Tenure Hearing of David Earl Humphreys, 1978 S.L.D. 689. To that end, the State and the schools herein have engaged in extensive educational efforts to warn the citizenry of the perils of illicit drugs. See, In the Matter of the Certificate of Barbara Corwick, OAL Dkt. No. EDE 3562-87, State Board of Examiners decision (March 24, 1988). Those who violate this deep-rooted policy, whether by the use of drugs or their manufacture and distribution, endanger the public welfare. Such individuals certainly cannot be entrusted with the responsibility of caring for school-aged pupils.

Similarly, the Commissioner has been consistently severe in his sanctions against teaching staff members who serve alcoholic beverages to students. See, e.g., In the Matter of the Tenure Hearing of Michael Gwaley, School District of the Township of Middletown, Monmouth County, 1986 S.L.D. 168, *aff'd* State Board, 1986 S.L.D. 196. (Teacher/coach who served alcoholic beverages to minor students at his home dismissed from tenured employment.) The State Board of Examiners supports the Commissioner and State Board of Education in their condemnation of teaching staff members who would expose minors to drugs and alcohol. See, In the Matter of the Licensure of Michael Gwaley, decided by the State Board of Examiners March 26, 1987, Order on Remand, September 24, 1987 Request for Certification after Revocation denied October 26, 1992 (Unbecoming conduct on part of teacher/coach who served alcoholic beverages to minor students warranted revocation of licenses).

The State Board of Examiners also found troubling what it perceived as inconsistencies between your signed resignation of February 14, 1994 and the recitation of the facts that led to the revocation of your county substitute license, as you now report them in your letter of March 10, 1998. While you admit the presence of students whom you did not invite to your home on February 12, 1994, nowhere in your March 10, 1998 letter do you acknowledge knowingly serving students alcohol or providing “aprox 1 hit of pot” to any student at your home on that night. Such inconsistency creates question regarding your rehabilitation and sincerity in reapplying for licensure. These factors, combined with the relatively short period of time since the earlier revocation of your county substitute license, militated against granting licensure following the revocation of your county substitute license.

Appeal of this decision is made before the Commissioner of Education pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:24-1 *et seq.*

Sincerely,

Ida B. Graham, Secretary
State Board of Examiners